

Of mosquitoes and men

ETC Group

We are at a crucial mid-point in our debates discussing Exterminator genes. The Gates-funded *Target Malaria* project is spending millions of dollars to convince African delegates to deny precaution and defend this risky extreme genetic modification as a silver bullet to combat malaria. Reality shows a completely different picture.

Yesterday, the Cayman Island government announced that all genetic modified mosquito trials in their country have failed and thus been cancelled. The government stated that their contract for trials to combat dengue with the UK-US company *Oxitec* were a waste: they were expensive, didn't result in decrease of mosquitoes and didn't have any effect on disease.¹ Earlier this year, a freedom of information request revealed that the biting female mosquito that transmit dengue had increased in one of areas where the trials happened.²

Cayman Islands had an agreement with *Oxitec* (owned by US synthetic biology company *Intrexon*) which earlier had its GM mosquito trials cancelled in Panama and Malaysia, among other countries, for similar reasons and for lack of consultation with affected local communities.

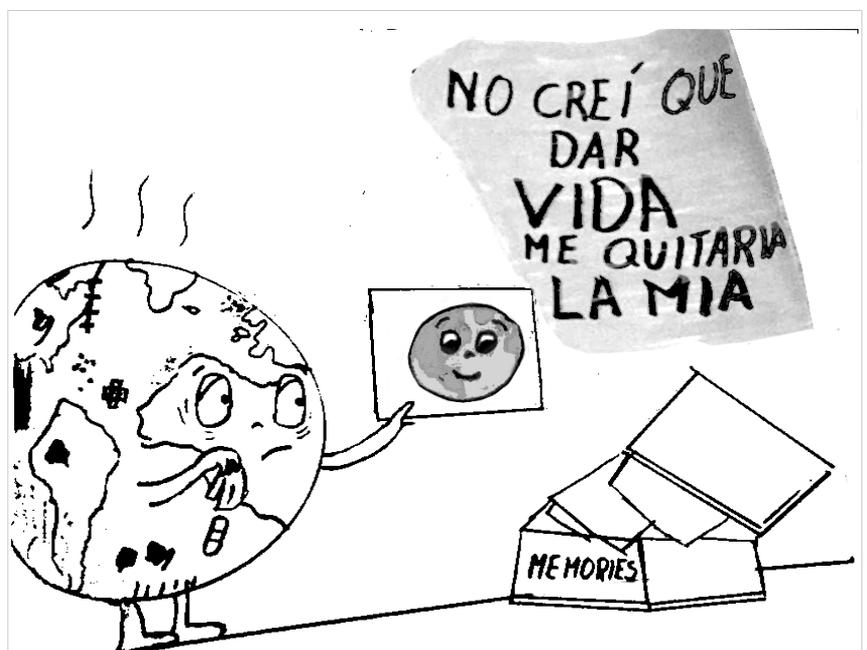
On the back of a failed introduction in Brazil and the ending of the scheme in Panama, its failure in Cayman should come as no surprise. The ecological effects of the introduction of GM mosquitoes are uncertain and there is no evidence the technology would ever lead to lower malaria cases.

Whilst *Oxitec* had only a budget of a few million, the scientists funded through the Gates Foundation at *Target Malaria* have potentially billions of

dollars to invest. *Target Malaria's* controversial proposed and imminent release of GM mosquitoes in Burkina Faso is a mere prelude to release gene drive mosquitoes in the coming months as a Trojan Horse for gene drives in agriculture - the big profit-maker.

Gene drives are genetic exterminators, designed to eliminate whole species through a genetic chain reaction, with untold consequences for biodiversity, agricultural and natural systems. Here in Sharm, delegates have the opportunity for call for a re-think on what could become an ecological equivalent of an atomic weapon. So far, several mega-diverse countries in Africa have taken a collective stance to allow their rural people to become *Target Malaria's* guinea pigs. But it is not too late for them to reverse the position and join other countries who care about ecology, indigenous rights and human rights on our planet to follow suit.

Footnotes: next page



I didn't know that giving birth to life was going to take away my own life

Drawing by Luna Alurralde (13 years, Bolivia), made in a sleepless night.

Geoengineering: C2G2 and IPLCs

Kamal Rai (IIFB)

The *Carnegie Climate Geoengineering Governance Initiative* (C2G2) is based on lab and modelling technology which has huge knowledge and policy gaps, unknown and complicated technology dealing on Climate change in the world. *International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity* (IIFB) noticed the big gaps and uncertainties on the technology. There is very less communication and research on impact or risk assessment on geo-engineering 'G2' modelling and the policy analysis and also not clear on governing system. It also talks about the diversification of the solar radiation and possibly to remove carbon dioxide from the Natural system. Therefore, it is difficult to say what will happen in near future on Mother Earth. It is more challenging for indigenous peoples and local communities it is already impacted IPLCs territories such as infrastructures expansion and climate change related technological expansion.

For Indigenous peoples and local communities, Mother Earth is sacred and the biodiversity is important for our livelihood and to maintain and continue for culture and spiritual. Indigenous peoples and local communities are using low cost indigenous and traditional knowledge based technology, practices and innovation for protecting, using sustainable since ancient time.

Therefore, IIFB would like to recommend to be ensuring the *Free Prior and Inform Consent*, full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities including woman and youth in respect the human rights of Indigenous peoples for policy gaps analysis and risks assessment process. Also, purpose to acknowledge the collective contribution of indigenous peoples and local communities such as local biodiversity outlook and CBMIS and use ecosystem based approach.

Indigenous peoples and local communities are aware on the uncertainty so would like to also purpose for capacity building on this subject matter and integration of the objectives of the CBD, Post-2020 frame work and 2050 visioning living harmony with Nature.

"We are running behind..."

Antje Lorch (Ecoropa)

Yet again, delegates were prevented from taking decisions because the plenary on Sunday was taken over for other things - this time reports from summits in the weekend. And when plenary was already overrunning for an hour or so, time was used for another "feel-good event": handing out awards to countries' Clearing House websites.

We were already surprised to see that the weekend was set aside for all-day summits, and that only three contact group sessions took place on Friday/Saturday.

The need for in-depth discussion is obvious - culminating into six contact groups and three Friends of the Chair taking place on Monday. Comparing the numbers: that were about 9 hours of contact groups in two otherwise free days - but about 15 to 20 hours on a day with working groups reviewing CRP papers.

As civil society organisations we are very concerned about this trend to remove negotiation time from the agenda. We already find that our own interventions are cut down to a single minute from what in past COPs were 2 or 3 minutes - because "we are running out of time".

The time set aside for the CHM awards on Sunday would have allowed IPLCs, civil society, youth and women to spend an extra 30 seconds to raise those issues that are of key importance to us.

If actual negotiations doesn't take place during sessions and if the time for decisions based on well-informed and negotiated comprises is reduced - then implicit decisions will take place somewhere else.

The COP and MOPs are the highest decision-making bodies of the Convention and its Protocols, but it seems that the sovereign decision-making by Parties is undermined by clogging the agenda.

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¹[telegraph.co.uk/science/2018/11/25/gm-mosquito-pilot-abandoned-officials-admit-did-not-work](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/2018/11/25/gm-mosquito-pilot-abandoned-officials-admit-did-not-work)

²genewatch.org/uploads/f03c6d66a9b354535738483c1c3d49e4/Failed_in_the_field_fin.pdf